



Claude Debussy

August 22, 1862 – March 25, 1918

Claude Debussy was a French composer who is recognized as the first impressionist composer, despite his rejection of the label. His orchestral works are among some of the most influential when looking back at 19th and 20th-century compositions.

Claude was born to a failed china shop owner and seamstress on the outskirts of Paris. In 1870, to escape the warfare in Paris, Claude and his family headed to Cannes to stay with an aunt. It was in Cannes that Debussy had his first piano lessons after his aunt paid for him to study with Jean Cerutti, an Italian musician. His natural talents became clear to those around him.

In 1872, at the age of ten, the Conservatoire de Paris offered him a spot to study for the next eleven years. Debussy made great progress and

studied under some of the world's best-known composers and musicians. After his first few years, his teachers reported that Debussy was somewhat careless. Despite his great talent, his lack of motivation and diligence in his studies caused him to fail competitions in 1878 and 1879, making him ineligible to continue his piano classes.

In 1879, Debussy ended up with a job as a resident pianist for the summer. The following year he was asked to accompany a singing class while still studying at the Conservatoire. Debussy fell in love with Marie Vasnier, one of the students in the class, writing 27 songs dedicated to her during those years. While things seemed to be going well, many of the faculty at the Conservatoire had somewhat of a distaste for Debussy, disapproving of his bending and breaking of the orthodox rules of composition that existed during that time.

In 1884, Debussy won France's most prestigious award in music, the Prix de Rome. He received recognition and a residency at the Villa Medici, a French Academy in Rome. Debussy spent two years struggling to write the kind of music his school and society desired. When he finally submitted four pieces to the Academy, they disapproved of his works, calling them bizarre and unperformable.

When Debussy returned to Paris in 1887, he and Marie ended their relationship. In 1890, Debussy met Erik Satie, a fellow composer who shared the same approach to writing music.

In 1894, after finally completing his first draft of Act 1 of his operatic *Pelléas et Mélisande*, and later married Marie-Rosalie Texier, who went by "Lilly." Debussy began to publish his compositions, staging and performing them, which received some attention from the public. While there wasn't much buzz over any of his works, Debussy taught and wrote, and worked as a music critic. In 1902, his opera finally premiered, becoming a quick success, and he finally gained positive recognition.

In 1905, Debussy premiered his most significant work in Paris. That same year, he had his only child, Claude-Emma, who came to be known as "Chouchou." She became a new inspiration to Claude, who began to find success again. In 1909, he became a member of the governing council at the Conservatoire. His works began to be performed in Paris and overseas, bringing more recognition to the French composer. As success increased again, Debussy was diagnosed with cancer. He gave his final concert in 1917 and became bedridden soon after. In March of 1918, he passed away at his home. Debussy is remembered today for developing his own style of music, new harmonies, and orchestral techniques.

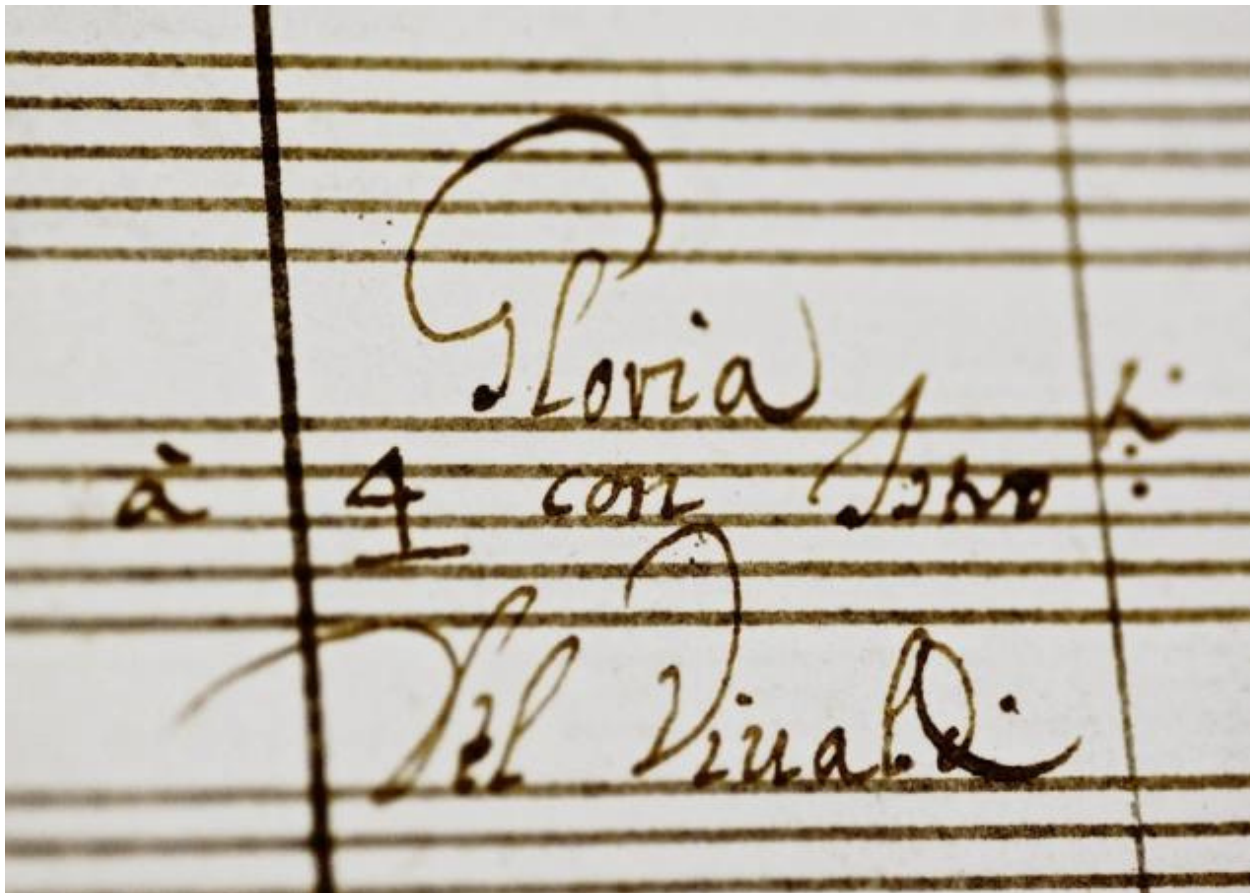
Classical Pieces

Week 1 - "La Mer"

Week 2 - "Rêverie"

Week 3 - "Clair de Lune"

Week 4 - "Two Arabesques"



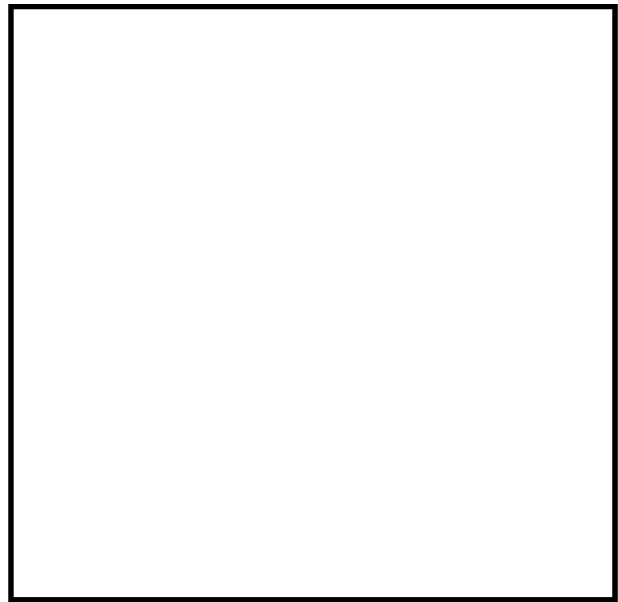
Composer Study

Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Place of Birth: _____

Composer Fun Facts:



Instruments Used: _____

Famous Compositions: _____

Further Study:
